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IMPERIAL TIE CRAWLER

The Empire's ground-combat vehicle

Attack on Coruscant

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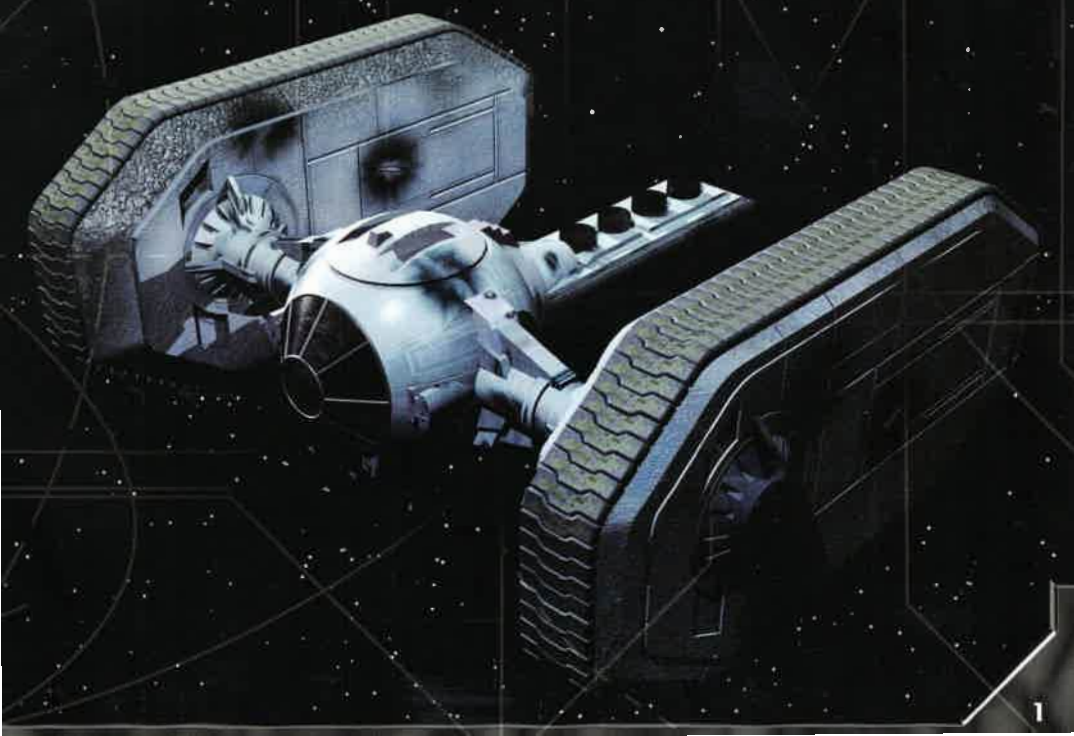
STAR WAR

"LOOK AT THE CARNAGE! MAYBE THEY'LL WIPE THEMSELVES OUT - SAVE US A LOT OF TROUBLE!"

HAN SOLO

The Galactic Empire founded by Emperor Palpatine relied heavily on its army and navy to impose its will. Technological military dominance comes at a very high price, and the Empire was always looking at ways of saving credits. Mass-produced vehicles and starships were considered disposable, along with their pilots, so were manufactured with little armour and no shields. This was the case with the standard TIE/ln starfighter and the two ground tanks that it spawned – the short-lived TIE ap-1, or TIE mauler, and the more successful century tank, or TIE crawler.



THE CENTURY TANK

THE STORY OF THE TIE CRAWLER

When the Emperor was killed at the Battle of Endor, the control he exerted over his underlings, both through fear and the dark side of the Force, was lost. High-ranking Imperials fell on each other in a struggle for supremacy that stretched their resources and ingenuity, as well as that of their hardware suppliers.

Santhe/Sienar Technologies had a long relationship with the Empire, and not all of it was friendly. During the Old Republic, the corporate arm, called Republic Sienar Systems, had designed and built ships for the Republic. Not averse to playing both sides, subsidiaries of the company took commissions from Darth Sidious, including designing and constructing Darth Maul's Sith Infiltrator. In the Clone Wars, Sienar produced designs for the CIS as well as the Republic, giving Palpatine an excuse to see the company nationalised and reorganised under the Empire. Raith Sienar ran the company from then, working exclusively for the Empire. This did not sit well with many senior executives of Santhe/Sienar Technologies.

Fall of the Empire

Raith Sienar was murdered a short time before the Battle of Endor. Suspiciously quickly, his position was taken by Lady Valles Santhe. On the fall of the Empire, she moved to supply all sides in the resulting Imperial Civil War. Without access to the limitless funds of the united Empire, the warlords embraced anything cheap to mass-produce, and that needed as little training as possible for the operators. To assist in ground operations, Santhe/Sienar Technologies took inspiration from an earlier tank – the TIE ap-1, or TIE mauler – to create the century tank, or TIE crawler.

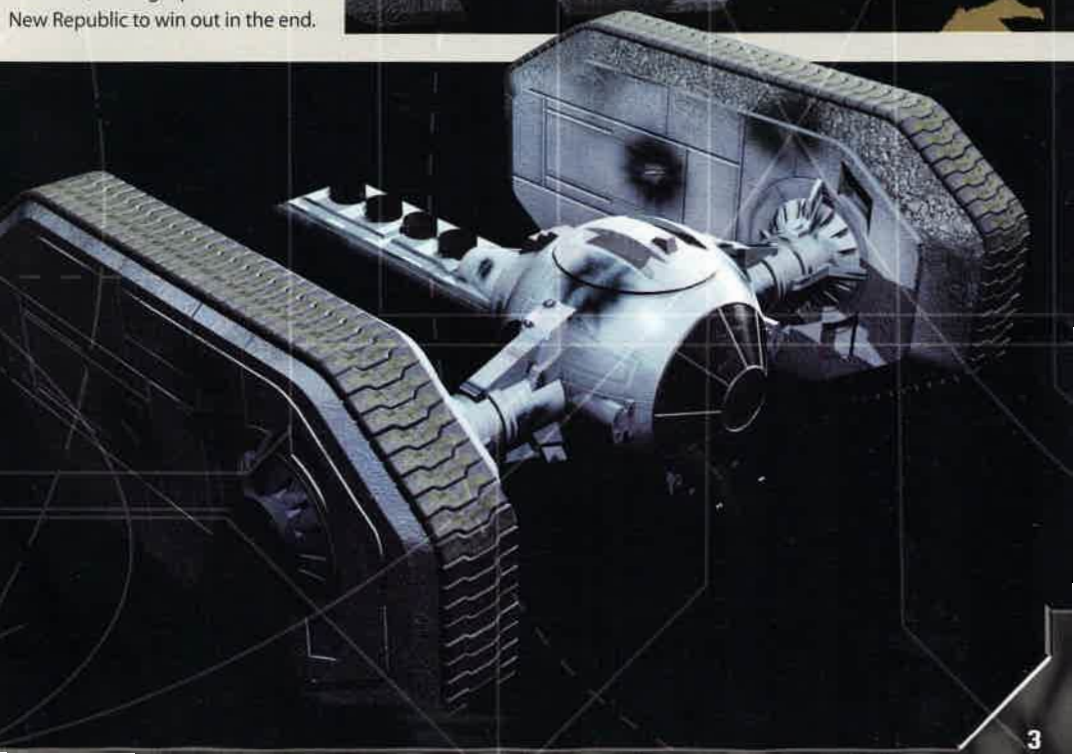
Simple yet Effective

The TIE mauler tank had used solar panels and a small power plant to keep its pair of SFS P-s4 twin ion engines operational. This worked, but was a high-maintenance solution which also meant that the tank needed to refuel often. The TIE crawler had two Santhe SSct power generators and four independent armoured fuel tanks. The tracks were sturdier and simpler, requiring far less maintenance. All in all, the TIE crawler had a significantly greater range than the mauler. As with the TIE mauler, the century tank could reach speeds of 90km/h, and was very agile. The standard TIE/ln ball-shaped cockpit and systems meant that pilot training was minimal. Foot controls operated the treads, while the former steering column now

operated the guns. These were a pair of medium blaster cannons under the cockpit in place of the starfighter's laser cannon. A retractable light turbolaser cannon turret was set under the cockpit. All this gave the TIE crawler far greater firepower than the earlier TIE ap-1.

Roll Out

During the Imperial Civil War, a number of warlords bought century tanks. Following the example set by the earlier TIE mauler, century tanks were fielded in groups, often as escorts for larger ground armour, such as Arakyd XR-85 tank droids. Their successes on the battlefield ironically served to thin the ranks of the already shrinking Imperial Remnant, making it possible for the New Republic to win out in the end.



THE IMPERIAL CIVIL WAR

LOSS OF CONTROL

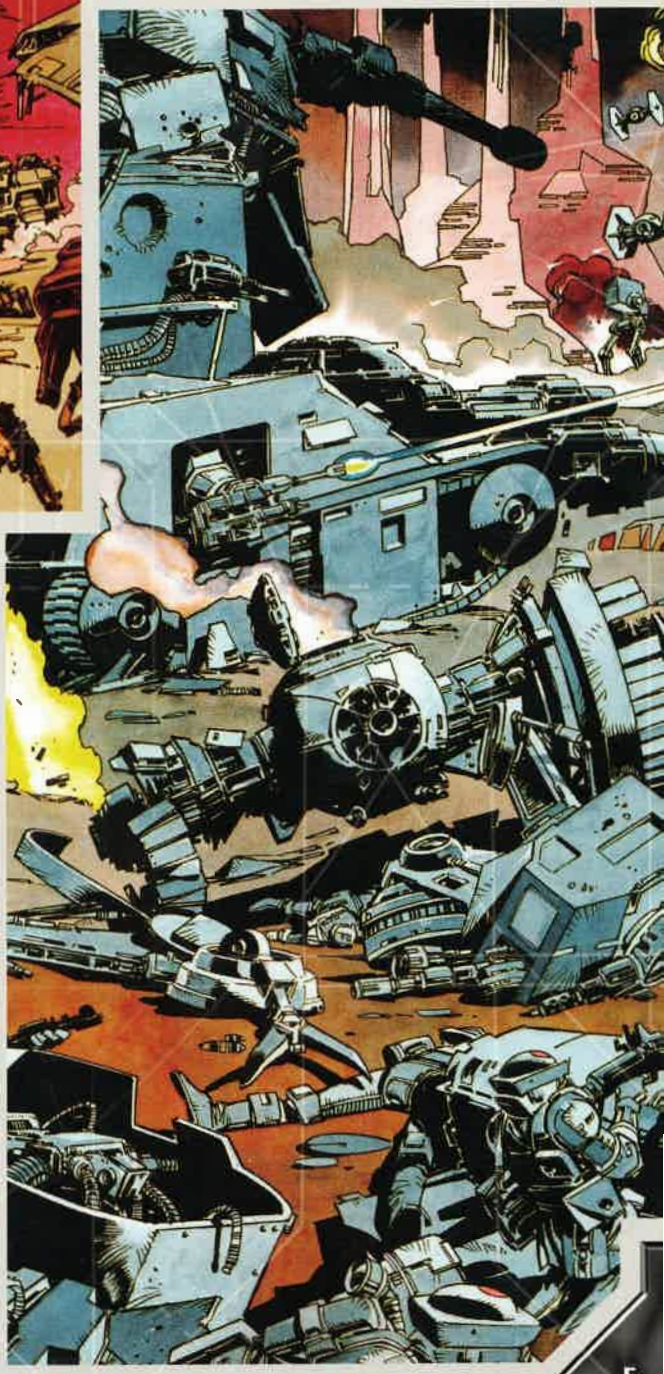
Emperor Palpatine was the central point around which the Empire revolved. His control of the galaxy-spanning Imperial war machine was very literal, thanks to his incredible mastery of the dark side of the Force. When Palpatine was killed at Endor, the Empire fell apart.

During his reign, Emperor Palpatine always played his senior staff – at all levels – off against each other, ensuring that any commander always had people looking over his or her shoulder, ever ready to take their place. Most of the time. the presence of Palpatine kept this tension from snapping into outright conflict. After Endor, a great many powerful individuals saw their chance and made a grab for domination. Declaring themselves warlords, or the true successor to Palpatine, or any number of other titles, they went to war not with the New Republic but with each other. The Imperial Civil War had begun.

Lacking a Leader

It took six years before the Imperial Civil War saw century tanks, stormtroopers, AT-ATs and all manner of Imperial military hardware fighting their former comrades across the ravaged surface of Coruscant. Initially, Sate Pestage, a former advisor to Palpatine, declared himself ruler of the Empire. He had no mandate, and so admirals, governors and generals quickly began to declare themselves independent. Pestage lasted a little less than six months before the three-man Imperial Ruling Council took over, quietly getting rid of Pestage. They were a front for the Director of Imperial Intelligence, Ysanne Isard, who soon stepped over their bodies and took control. Isard lasted two years before the New Republic dealt with her, after her position was weakened by internal squabbling. Grand Admiral Zsinj, one of few potentially powerful enough to unite the Empire, was betrayed by jealous rivals and defeated. The remaining Imperial Remnant were on the retreat until Grand Admiral Thrawn returned. His campaign drove the New Republic to the brink of defeat, but even he was not fully supported by the Remnant. Ultimately, he lost.

LOOK AT THE CARNAGE!
MAYBE THIS TIME THEY'LL WIPE EACH OTHER OUT-- SAVE US A LOT OF TROUBLE!
LUKE'S SIGNAL CAME FROM THE CENTER OF THE CITY... NEAR THE OLD IMPERIAL PALACE...
I CAN SEE THE LIBERATOR, HAN...OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT!



Palpatine Reborn

If Thrawn's alien origins prevented some in the Imperial Remnant from joining with him, his achievements gave them something to think on. Six years after the Endor debacle, the newly formed Imperial Ruling Council brought the Remnant together and drove the New Republic from Coruscant. The New Republic was reduced once again to a rebel organisation. However, when the Imperials decided to vote one of their number into the position of Emperor, they quickly fell to arguing and quickly thereafter to outright conflict. Coruscant burned. At this point, Palpatine returned. However, despite rallying many to his cause, he was defeated by Luke Skywalker and his sister, Leia Organa Solo. No single effective leader appeared until Admiral Daala emerged from the secret Maw Installation. Her Star Dreadnought *Knight Hammer* acted as a rallying point as much as she did. However, she decided to take on the new Jedi Academy on Yavin IV, and was defeated. She passed leadership of the Imperial Remnant to Admiral Pellaeon. With so little of the Empire left, Pellaeon was able to hold the Remnant together. The Imperial Civil War was over.

THE EMPEROR REBORN

CREATING A DARK EMPIRE

Six years after the death of Emperor Palpatine at the Battle of Endor, the Imperial Remnant fell into a civil war. On Coruscant, Luke Skywalker was captured by a Force storm and taken to the planet Byss. There, he was brought before the architect of the storm – the reborn Emperor Palpatine.

When the first Death Star was destroyed at Yavin, the Emperor took out his anger on one of the station's main designers. Bevel Lemelisk was trapped in a mesh cage and devoured alive by piranha beetles. At the moment of death, his essence was transferred into a clone body.

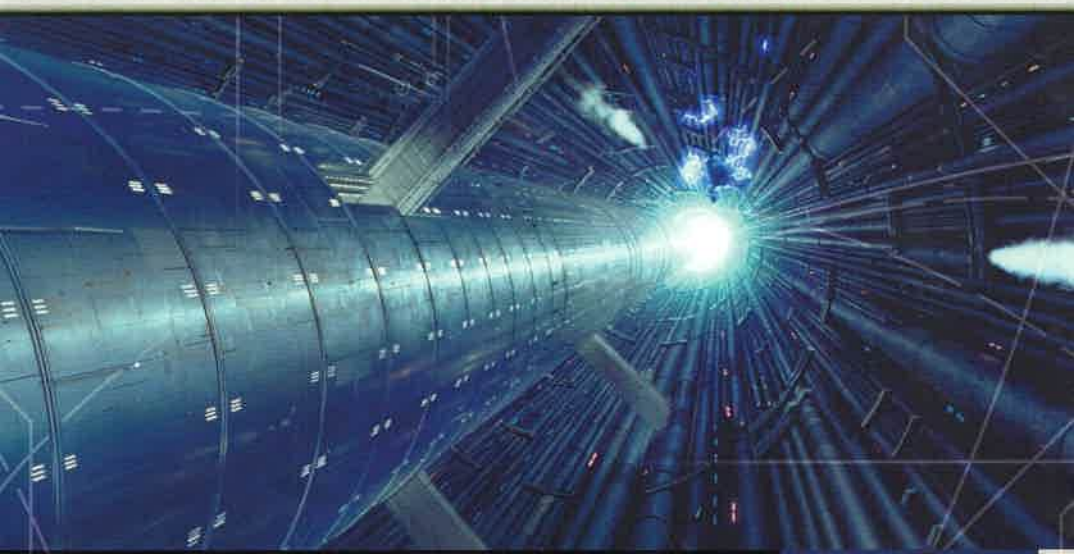
Lemelisk lived again, to be executed many times and in many horrible new ways. This was not just an entertaining distraction for Palpatine – this was him experimenting with a process he would later rely on to extend his life.

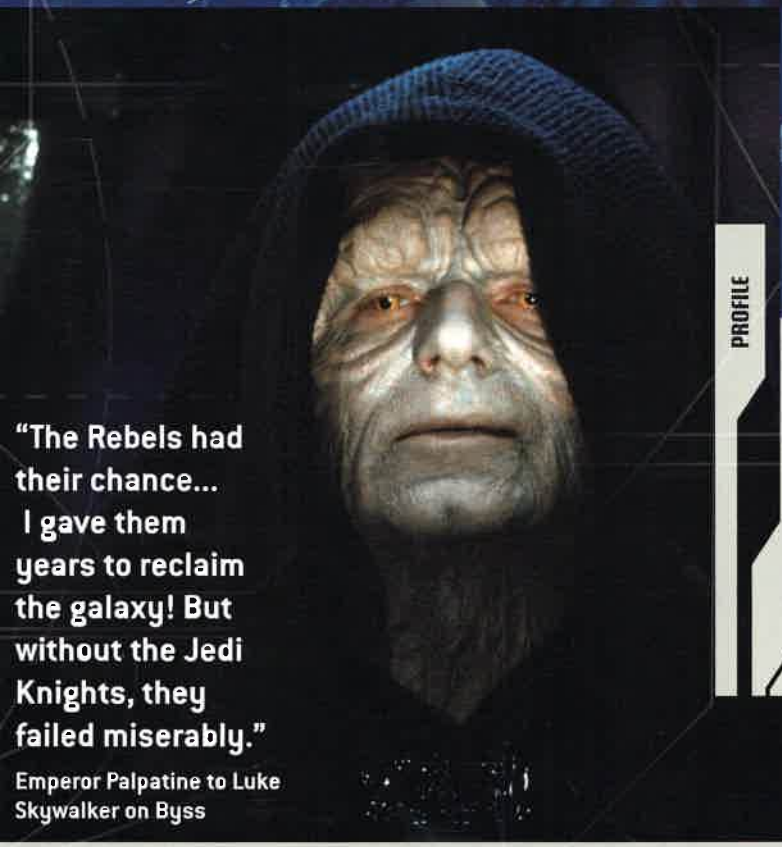
Research

The Sith had long known of the secret of essence transfer. Before Palpatine, the Sith Masters had used the technique to haunt their own tombs, preying on the curious and possessing their bodies. Someone of sufficient willpower, or strong with either the light or dark sides of the Force, could reject the aggressive essence, sending it screaming into the void. Palpatine was not the first to use 'blank' cloned bodies either. Unfortunately for him, the dark side energies that swirled around Byss, the planet where the cloned bodies were kept, caused the occupied clones to degenerate more and more quickly with each transfer. What Palpatine needed was an entirely new host…

Long, Dark Journey

When Palpatine was hurled down the core shaft on the second Death Star, his body was destroyed in a great explosion of dark side energy. His spirit essence began the long journey from Endor to Byss, a planet at the centre of the galaxy where Palpatine had established his personal fortress. In that fortress, in various secret and not-so-secret areas, cloning cylinders held the Emperor's future vessels. Initially, Palpatine's essence took over one of





"The Rebels had their chance... I gave them years to reclaim the galaxy! But without the Jedi Knights, they failed miserably."

Emperor Palpatine to Luke Skywalker on Byss

PROFILE

The Emperor's clone

Homeworld
Byss

Species
Human

Gender
Male

Height
1.78m

Weapons
Dark side of the Force, lightsaber

his servants, the Emperor's Hand, Jeng Droga. Droga was driven insane by the process, but this was of no concern to Palpatine. On Byss, he recovered from the ordeal, formulated his plans, and gathered his forces…

Watching, Waiting

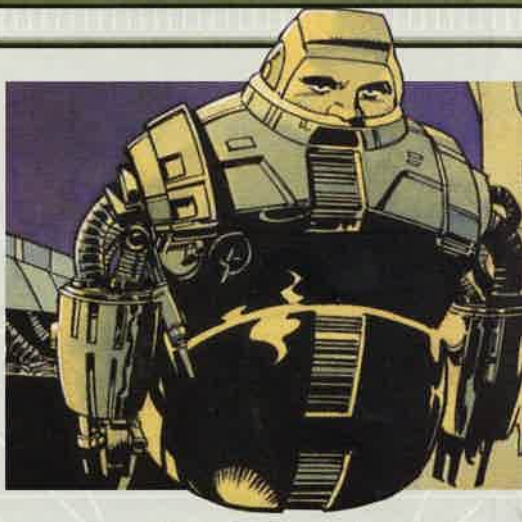
Palpatine's mastery of the dark side of the Force was terrifying. Through the Empire, he had sought domination of the galaxy with overwhelmingly powerful technology, such as the Death Star stations, and a vast military. As he gathered his strength in his fortress, readying himself to announce his presence to the greater galaxy, he watched those he had previously commanded tear the Empire apart. By the time Grand Admiral Thrawn returned, Palpatine's hatred of his former creation was absolute. The Emperor went so far as to subtly ensure Thrawn failed. In place of the Empire and the New Republic, Palpatine planned to bring about a new form of galactic governance. He would use the dark side of the Force to control everything and everyone. What's more, he was capable of it.

Storm Over Coruscant

The one thing Palpatine sought was an apprentice to maintain Darth Bane's Rule of Two. Despite everything, Palpatine wanted Luke Skywalker. During the Battle of Coruscant, Luke's captured Star Destroyer had been brought down. With his forces ready, Palpatine

Jedi Hero Empatojayos Brand

The Emperor's essence was dragged out of the galaxy through the sacrifice of a former Jedi knight. Empatojayos Brand had been Padawan to Yaddle. He was a general during the Clone Wars, and was hunted during the Great Jedi Purge. Darth Vader tracked him to Nar Shaddaa, all but destroying Brand and his ship. Brand was rescued by the Ganathans, given a prosthetic body, and became their king. Years later, he encountered Luke Skywalker and left the Ganathans to rejoin the Jedi Order.



"Palpatine will die with me. He will never return. The Force, and all the Jedi who went before us... will make sure of that."

Empatojayos Brand

opened a wormhole in space, creating a huge Force storm that lifted Luke from Coruscant to a dungeon ship, and thence to Byss. Initially, Luke joined with the Emperor, hoping to subvert Palpatine's plans from the inside. The Sith Master had anticipated this, of course, and Luke's efforts failed as he was drawn closer and closer to the dark side. In the end, Luke's sister, Leia pulled him back, and together they defeated Palpatine. He lost control of his Force storm and was consumed by it.

Back Again. Again.

During his time on Byss, Luke destroyed many of the Emperor's clones while they lay in stasis. He had not got to them all, but others sought to rectify this error. Only one clone remained to Palpatine when his essence returned to Byss. His attempts to create more were scuppered by the fact that the genetic template had been tampered with. Palpatine desperately needed an entirely new host, as his clones were now deteriorating at an alarming rate. His military forces were driving the New Republic back, bringing many worlds back under the control of the new Empire.

Final Death

Palpatine faced another threat. Leading a group of Jedi, Luke Skywalker was hunting the Emperor. They infiltrated his massive *Eclipse*-class Star Dreadnought, the *Eclipse II* and, finding the Emperor gone, sent it crashing into the planet-destroying super weapon, the Galaxy Gun. It misfired as it disintegrated, its last shot shattering Byss. Just before this, Palpatine had sought out Leia Organa Solo and her newborn son, Anakin. He tried to transfer his essence into Anakin, but his spirit was trapped in the dying body of one of Luke's Jedi, who took the Emperor with him into the Force. There would be no return for Palpatine, or his Empire .

THE *ECLIPSE*

MIGHTY STAR DREADNOUGHT

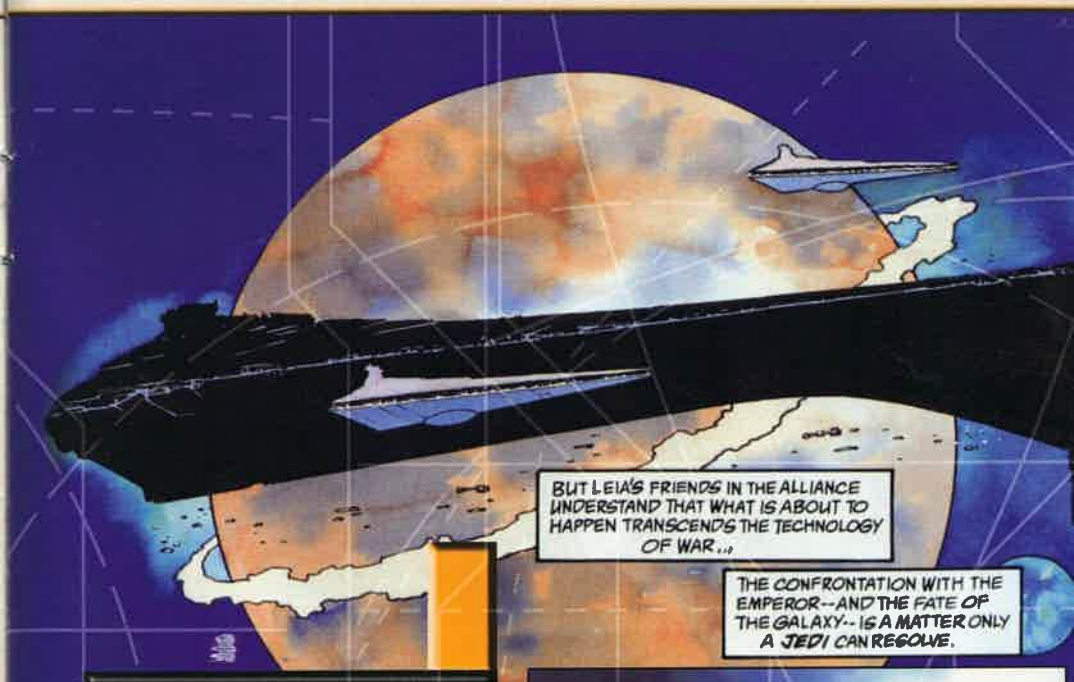
The Empire could never be accused of being subtle. The Emperor understood the need for a technological terror, even while he later dismissed domination through technology as a mere tactic. The *Eclipse*-class ships were a useful statement, but the dark side of the Force remained more powerful.

The *Eclipse* project, begun at Kuat Drive Yards not long after the Battle of Yavin, saw the construction of two massive new Star Dreadnoughts. While shorter by some two kilometres than the slender *Executor*-class ships, the *Eclipse* and *Eclipse II* were far more massive in their tonnage, seeming far, far bigger by comparison.

The two construction projects are shrouded in mystery. It seems likely that *Eclipse II* secretly began construction years after *Eclipse*, around the Battle of Hoth, and away from its sister ship. However, records of these projects are designed to obfuscate, and the truth may never be known. What is known is that neither ship saw full service until the New Republic era.

Bringing Out The Big Guns

The inky-black *Eclipse*-class Star Dreadnoughts were designed for destruction. So heavily shielded and armoured that they could physically batter smaller ships aside without concern, they mounted 550 heavy laser cannons, 500 turbolasers, 75 ion cannons, 100 tractor beam projectors and, to ensure no foe could escape into hyperspace, 10 gravity well projectors. Their hangars could launch 600 TIE interceptors and 96 TIE bombers, while ground assaults were led by 100 AT-ATs, with over 150,000 troops ready to mop up after them. If all this wasn't enough, the *Eclipse*-class mounted an axial superlaser. Thought to be the equivalent to one of the beams that made up a Death Star planet destroyer, the *Eclipse*-class had to make do with merely cracking a planet's crust or instantly wiping out a large capital ship. Fortunately, both *Eclipse*-class Star Dreadnoughts were destroyed in action.


BUT LEIA'S FRIENDS IN THE ALLIANCE UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TRANSCENDS THE TECHNOLOGY OF WAR...
THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE EMPEROR--AND THE FATE OF THE GALAXY--IS A MATTER ONLY A JEDI CAN RESOLVE.

PROFILE *Eclipse* Star Dreadnought

Type
Star Dreadnought

Manufacturer
Kuat Drive Yards

Length
17.5 kilometres

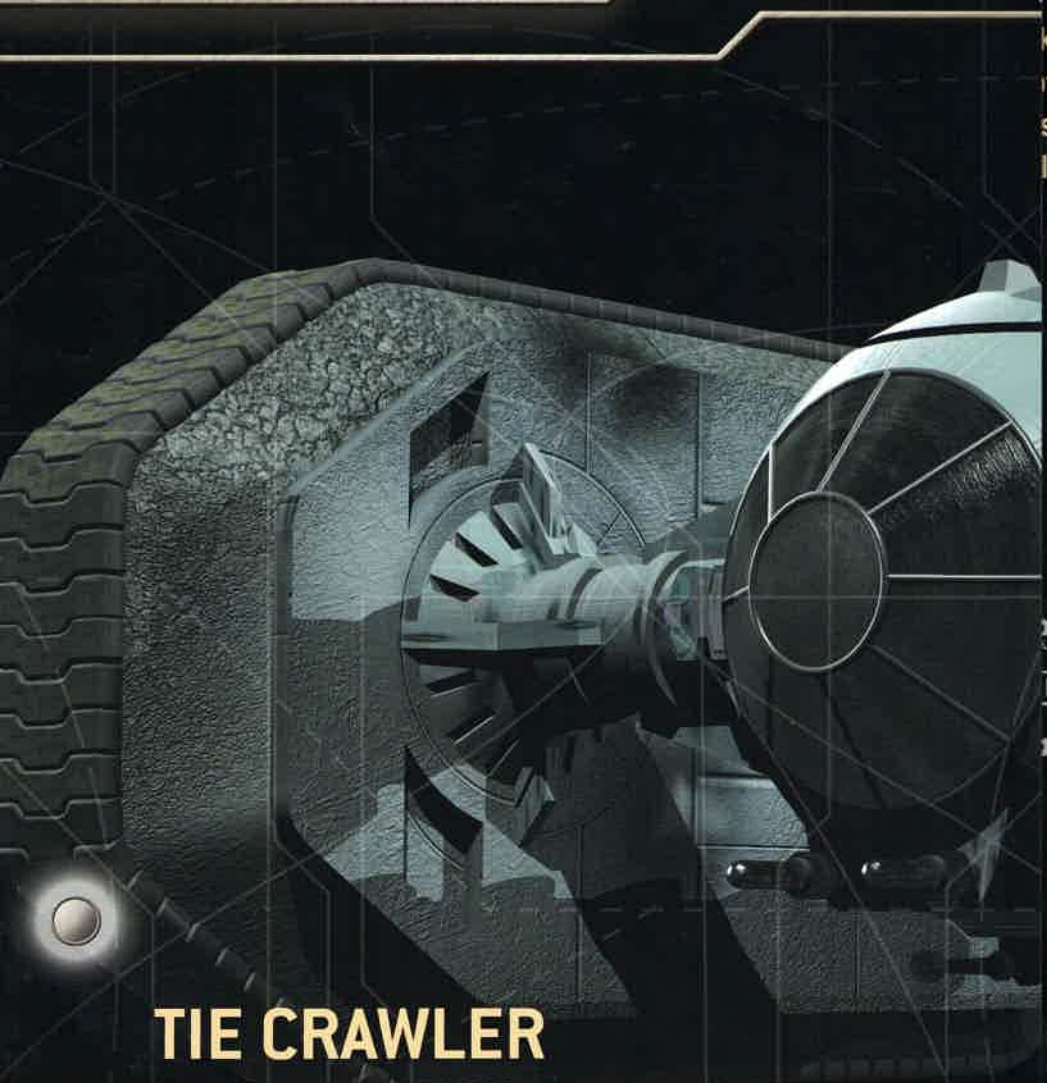
Weapons
1x axial super laser, 550x heavy laser cannons, 500x turbolasers, 75x ion cannons, 100x tractor beam projectors, 10x gravity well projectors

Crew
708,470, with 4,175 gunners

Passengers
150,000 troops

Affiliation
Galactic Empire

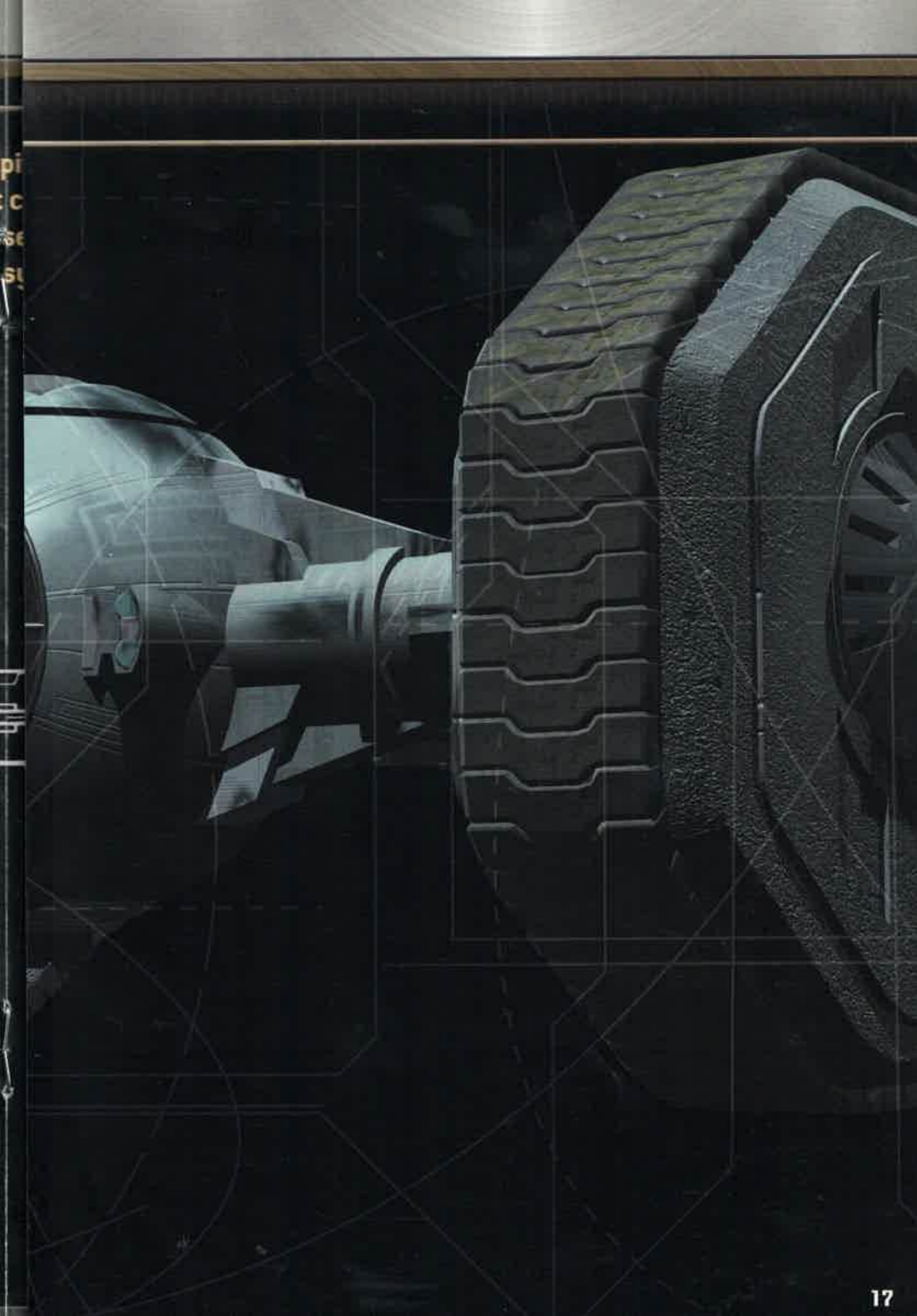
SOMETHIN' BIG COMIN' OUT OF HYPER-SPACE! WE'RE GONNA HIT IT!
ENGINES FULL REVERSE!
LUKE...WHY CAN I FEEL YOU SO NEAR?
YOUR MIND... IMPRESSIVE.
YOU HAVE PLAYED THE EMPEROR'S GAME...AND LOST.



TIE CRAWLER

THE CENTURY TANK

It is telling that the precursor to the century tank, the TIE ap-1, had an enhanced self-destruct system: it and its pilot were a disposable resource. The century tank was proposed as a successor before the Imperial Civil War, with early examples deployed on Kashyyyk. It was not until resource-strapped Imperial warlords needed a quick, cheap solution that the TIE crawler was fielded in large numbers.



THE CENTURY TANK

Type
Compact ground assault vehicle

Manufacturer
Santhe/Sienar Technologies

Length
6.7 metres

Engines
2x Santhe SSct power generators

Maximum Speed
90km/h

Weapons
1x retractable light turbolaser cannon,
1x paired medium blaster cannon

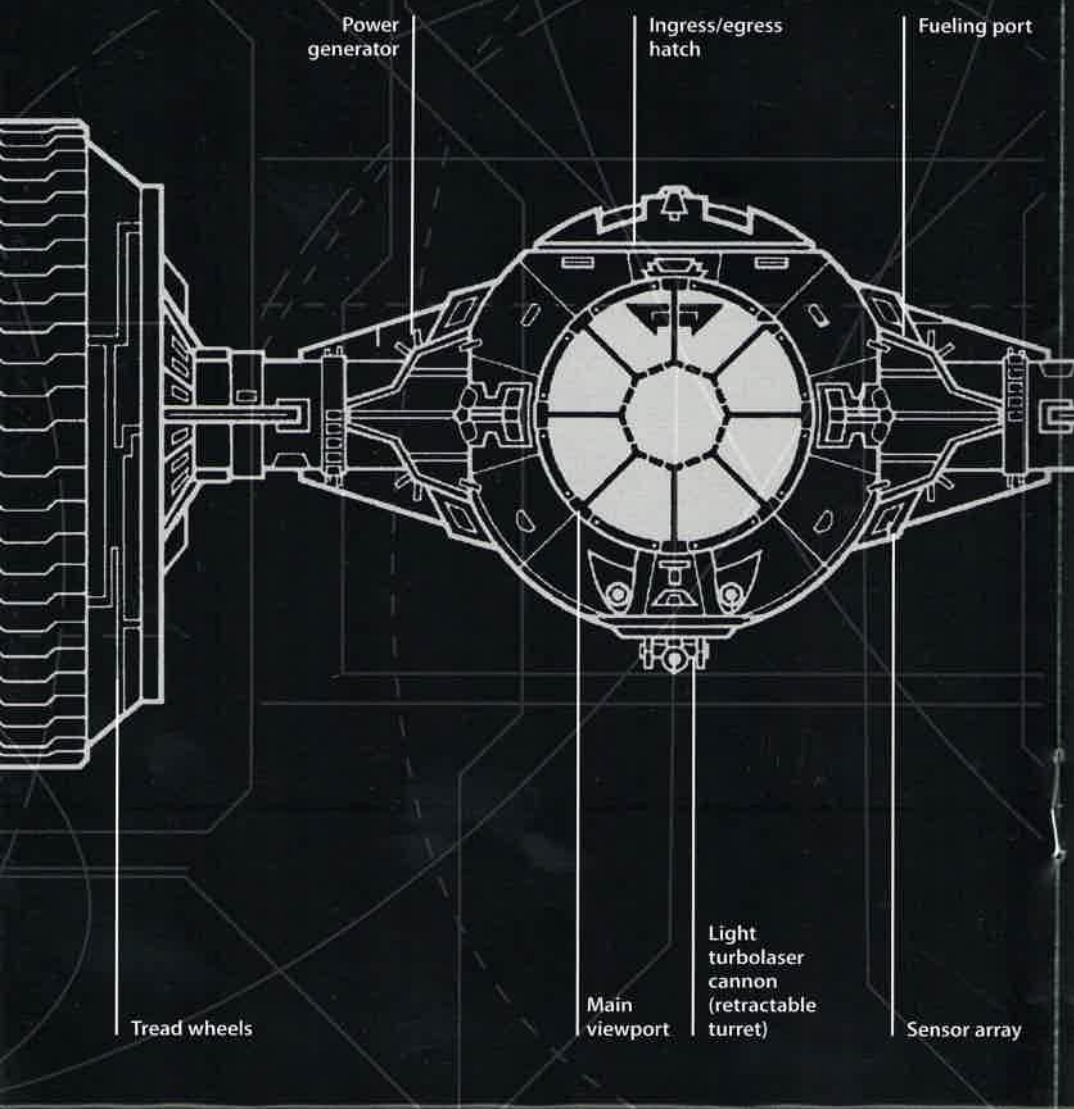
Crew
1x pilot/gunner

Cargo
65kg

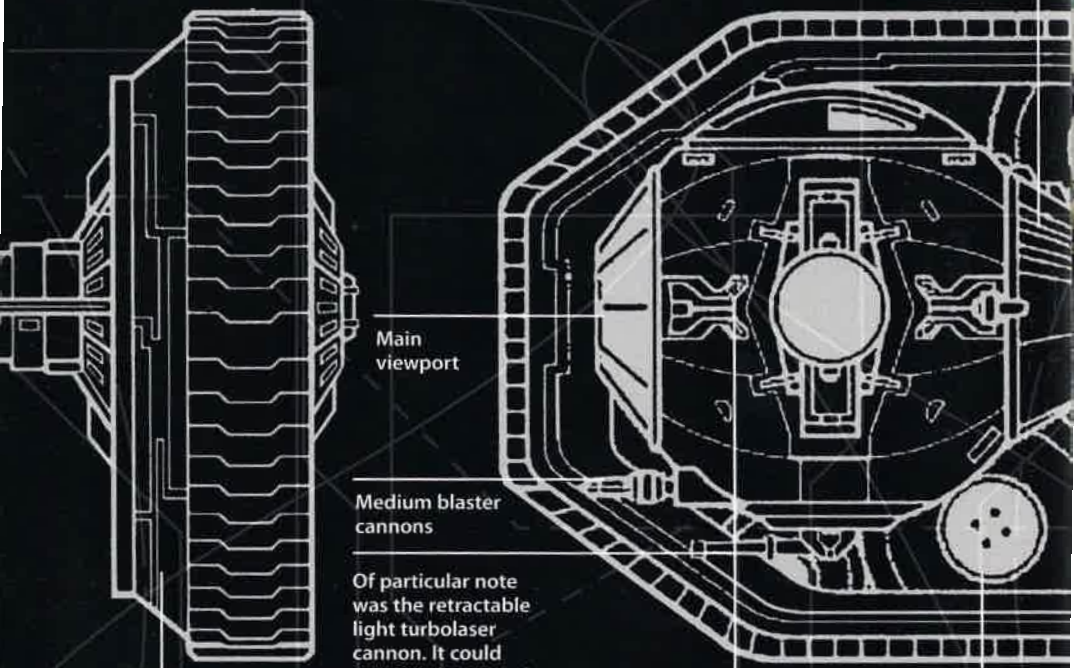
Operational Range
5 days minimum (often exceeded)

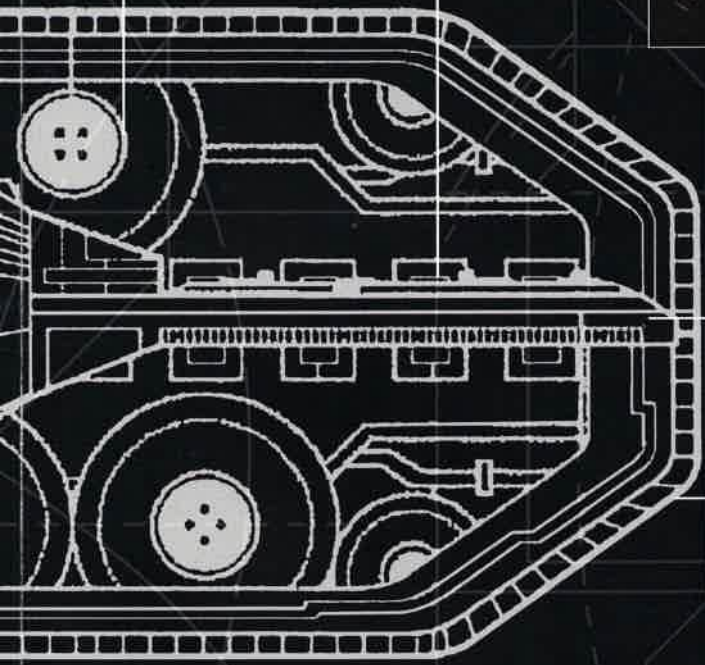
The c
slight
versio
steeri

cockpit of the century tank was a largely unmodified TIE/In starfighter cockp
tly to allow for the fact that the tank would be operating in gravity. The foot c
on. Now each operated the relevant track. The further down they were pres
ring yoke was now used exclusively for weapons, with the N-s6 fire control s



t. The pilot's seat, a grav-couch, had to be modified
ontrols were hugely simplified from the starfighter
ed, the faster the track turned. The starfighter's
ystems now tied to the tank's guns.


Blaster cannon power generator
Main viewport
Medium blaster cannons
Of particular note was the retractable light turbolaser cannon. It could swing right around to fire backwards through the tracks – a trick made far easier by the TIE fighter's N-s6 system.
Tread wheels
Sensor array
Tread



Drive system

Repulsorlift engines are expensive when needed in their hundreds of thousands, so the TIE crawler used two drive tracks. The tank was relatively light, and had a top speed of 90km/h across all but the most complex terrain. Its weapons were very respectable, and it lacked the self-destruct mechanism that tempted so many commanders to use the TIE ap-1 as a suicide attack craft. In fact, crawler pilots were actively encouraged to get out and patch up their tank if it was damaged, and the simple systems the crawler used made this an achievable option. What's more, as the tank used standard Imperial components, the wreckage surrounding the pilots during the Imperial Civil War made finding replacement parts depressingly easy.

l drive wheel

SALLA ZEND AND SHUG NINX

SMUGGLING PARTNERS

Smugglers were known for their shifting loyalties, with friendships often falling before a tempting pile of credits. Equally, smugglers could be passionately loyal to their true friends. Han Solo's friends Salla Zend and Shug Ninx fortunately fell into the latter camp.

While the likes of Mako Spince had no loyalty to anyone but themselves, and few concerns beyond raking in the credits, Salla Zend and Shug Ninx preferred clear consciences.

When Han Solo, Leia Organa Solo, Chewbacca and C-3PO arrived on Nar Shaddaa looking for a ship to make a legal run into the Deep Core as part of their rescue of Luke Skywalker, Salla and Shug were initially drawn by the money. However, with the Emperor crushing freedom in the galaxy once again, Solo's old friends showed their true worth – risking their lives, liberty and property to save Han and his friends from the forces of evil.

Salla Zend

A truly gifted mechanic, Salla was tempted away from the safe life of a lab tech by the promise of adventure in the spaceports on the shadier side of the galaxy. Working hard and smart, Zend stayed clear of the Hutts and was able to secure a loan for her first ship, the *Rimrunner*, that wouldn't see her enslaved. She began smuggling with Han Solo, and the two were more than partners for a while. Solo rescued her after *Rimrunner* 'stalled' near a neutron star. She lost the ship and, when she pursued Han for marriage, Salla lost him too. By the time Han walked back into her life, Salla had a new ship and a new life. Still, Salla enjoyed the adventures Solo brought with him, and the New Republic credits he left behind.

Shug Ninx

Born to a human father and a non-human mother, Shug Ninx was soon kicked about by the Empire. His talent lay in fixing even the most seemingly lost machinery, and he traded on this skill until he could set up his own small, secret repair dock on Nar Shaddaa. Ninx's gift and ability to keep a secret saw him become very successful, and adding Salla Zend to his crew redoubled his repair yard's reputation. Han was an old friend, and helping him out gave Ninx a chance to flex his flying muscles and to stick it to the Empire.

PROFILE

Shug Ninx

Species

Human/Theelin

Gender

Male

Height

1.85m

Affiliation

Smuggler

PROFILE

Salla Zend

Species

Human

Gender

Female

Height

1.78m

Starship

Starlight Intruder

Affiliation

Smuggler

No Easy Way In

Shug Ninx's starship garage had only one way in or out – the chute. Hidden behind a holographic advertising hoarding, the heavily armoured doors to the chute mostly stayed open. The turbolaser turrets that shot down anything lacking permission to enter or exit kept visitors honest. If anyone wasn't, then Shug and his techs could always use the salvaged wrecks.

BYSS

THE EMPEROR'S DEEP CORE FORTRESS

If the planet Byss was a legend, it was a dark one. Set in the heart of the Deep Core Sector at the heart of the galaxy, it became Emperor Palpatine's favourite retreat. Wrapped in the shroud of the dark side, it was a glittering and deadly trap for the unwary.

The Deep Core was a relatively small region of intense stellar activity. Here, the oldest stars in the galaxy orbited a huge black hole. The stellar bodies were often so close as to tear each other to pieces. Even the relatively stable areas, some with planets orbiting peaceful stars, were almost impossible to navigate because of the energies that surrounded them. Though ancient empires in the distant past had colonised the worlds of the Deep Core, it was only during the Clone Wars that the area was once again fully explored, mapped and studied. The impetus for this was Supreme Chancellor Palpatine's desire to ensure the safety of the Republic. In private, Darth Sidious saw opportunities to advance his own plans.

Imperial to the Core

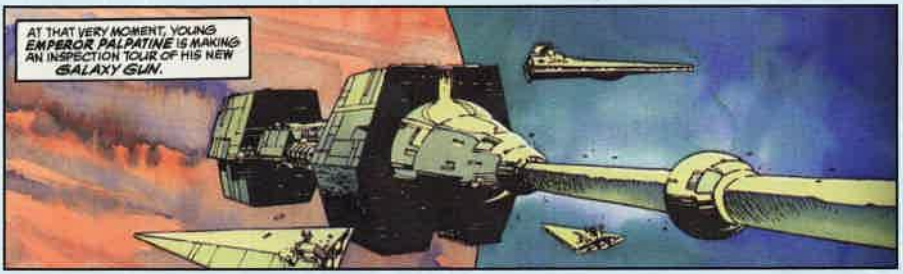
When Palpatine became Emperor, his exploration of the Deep Core stepped up a gear, though it was more secretive. As scouts returned with news of habitable planets, most of them were executed. Information from probe droids was filed away in Palpatine's own archives. He was determined that the Deep Core would be his realm. Deep Core was declared a maximum security zone. The official story that this was to protect spacers from the extreme dangers of navigating the Core, as well as to prevent smugglers and pirates from exploiting it as a place to create hidden bases to strike at the shipping of rich Core Worlds, such as Coruscant itself. Ships entering the area had to be cleared by the Empire's security services before continuing. The Imperial Hyperspace Security Net laced the entire region with gravity mines and scanning and jamming stations to ensure it was impossible for unauthorised travel. The Empire turned key worlds in the Deep Core into fortresses, protected by a massive sector fleet as well as shields and weapons of their own. These worlds were colonised by Palpatine's select agents and supporters, all housed in magnificent palaces dominating sprawling estates. Chief amongst these fortress worlds was Byss – the Emperor's personal retreat. It was here that some of Palpatine's most horrific crimes against the citizens of the galaxy were committed.

A TURBULENT FALL THROUGH THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE, AND THE DUNGEON SHIP DOCKS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A LUMINOUS CITY...
WE ARE READY TO RECEIVE THE PRISONER!

f there's a dark centre of the universe, his is it, Artoo..." Luke Skywalker approaching Byss

YOU SEE THAT TOWER? THAT'S WHERE LUKE IS. WE'LL LAND IN THAT BIG HANGAR ON TOP!
RIGHT--IF WE DON'T GET VAPORIZED TO GLOWING FRAGMENTS FIRST!
OH, ARTOO! LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO YOU! I WARNED YOU THERE WAS GOING TO BE TROUBLE!
BEEEEP?
LEIA, HAN, IT WAS VERY FOOLISH FOR YOU TO COME HERE.
I TOLD YOU THAT MY DESTINY IS NOT YOURS.

Security is very tight on the Emperor's new throneworld... Bounty hunters are not wanted on Byss!



Byss Blasted!

The Galaxy Gun was a massive weapon that fired projectiles through hyperspace into the hearts of distant planets, destroying them. It orbited Byss, fully protected by an Imperial fleet. When the Emperor took his massive Star Dreadnought *Eclipse II* to Onderon, Artoo Detoo was able to reprogram the ship to return to Byss and crash into the Galaxy Gun. The weapon's last projectile fell on Byss, destroying it utterly.

Populating Byss

The early population of Byss consisted of non-human slaves and political prisoners. The Clone Wars and the political and social purges that accompanied the birth of the Empire provided innumerable prisoners to assist in readying Byss for its first official colonists. The forced labour built fabulous resorts as well as the Emperor's own fortress. Magnificent ruins dotted the planet, left by unknown civilisations from pre-history. Combined with the resorts, the planet became the most exclusive place for select Imperial citizens to emigrate to. On the destruction of Alderaan, survivors were invited to settle on Byss. There, they were told, they would find peace.

Ugly Truth

While the population lived lives of leisure and luxury, the dark side energies that Palpatine and his minions wove about Byss began to leach away the life energies of the people. Many had been specially selected to make this process easier and more fruitful for the Emperor. Slowly, the planet itself became as corrupted as the people until, seen from space, Byss seemed to be bathed in an unnatural glow. During the Great Jedi Purge, captured Padawan and other Force-sensitive individuals from the Order were taken to Byss. There, they faced Darth Vader. He killed all but four, and those he and his master twisted into powerful Inquisitors, to be sent out into the galaxy to hunt former Jedi and others who might pose a threat. There were more dark side Adepts trained on Byss through the years, adding to the pall of the dark side on the planet.

Dark Projects

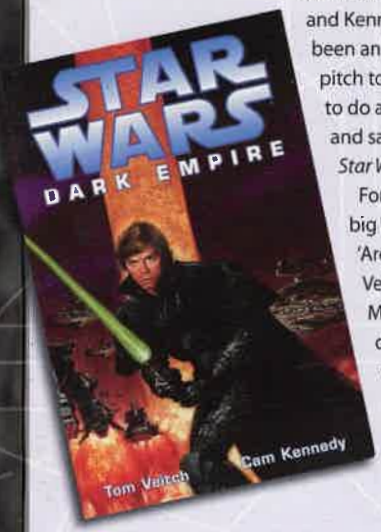
Orbiting Byss were innumerable starship dry docks and construction yards. Here, the Emperor developed prototypes and projects that would be used to terrorise the galaxy. These included the World Devastators and the Galaxy Gun – the latter inadvertently responsible for destroying the planet itself. Byss was surrounded by a fleet of Star Destroyers and other craft protecting the Emperor's personal security exclusion zone. Here was the huge tower of the Emperor's Citadel. From there, Palpatine could command his forces. It was protected by three full legions of stormtroopers, along with 600 terrifying dark side Imperial Sentinels. Years after he died on the second Death Star, Palpatine returned to Byss to occupy one of the clone bodies he had stored on Byss. Only the efforts of the new Jedi Order, led by Luke Skywalker, saw Palpatine stopped and finally destroyed.

CREATING *DARK EMPIRE*

MAKING *STAR WARS* GRAPHIC

Though many point to the June 1991 publication of the first book of Timothy Zahn's *Thrawn Trilogy* as the point where *Star Wars* began its return to the public eye, the Dark Horse comic book series *Dark Empire* technically predates it, despite the fact that it finally saw publication in December 1991.

Interviewed in a *Star Wars* special of *Comics Interview* in 1995, Dark Empire writer Tom Veitch recalled the prolonged publishing process for the first major *Star Wars* comic book project in years. 'Cam Kennedy (the artist on *Dark Empire*) and I collaborated on a creator-owned comic book series called *The Light and Darkness War* for Epic Comics, which is part of Marvel Comics.' Veitch and Kennedy felt that *Star Wars* had always been an influence on their work, so decided to pitch to Lucasfilm in the hope of being invited to do a new *Star Wars* story. 'They called us and said they were very interested in doing a *Star Wars* comic...'



Fortunately, Veitch and Kennedy had a big name on their side from the outset. 'Archie Goodwin was our editor at Epic,' Veitch said. 'As everybody knows, he's Mister *Star Wars*. He did the *Star Wars* daily newspaper strip. He wrote the movie adaptations for Marvel, and he wrote many of the Marvel series... So we went and took the series (*Dark Empire*) to him. And he said yeah, he'd like to do it.'

Things were not so simple though. Goodwin left Marvel, who let the *Star Wars* licence lapse. The *Dark Empire* project had been on hold for over a year before Dark Horse took over the *Star Wars* comics. At this point, two issues of the series had been created, with a setting in the timeline of just after the Battle of Endor. A decision was made to shift *Dark Empire* forward in the timeline to a point after the events of Zahn's Thrawn story, with some minor changes being made to the art and dialogue.

The Scottish Engineer

Cam Kennedy is a hugely respected and influential comic book artist and painter. He had lived for seven years in France, having had a vague brush with comics in the mid-1970s. Returning to the UK, Kennedy worked in a commercial art studio where, one fateful day, someone

Chunky!

"Mass has always been my favourite thing to draw. I used to do a lot of Second World War stories, and I got a chance there to draw nice, heavy-looking tanks and planes and things... just take that a couple of thousand years into the future and you've got *Star Wars*." Cam Kennedy

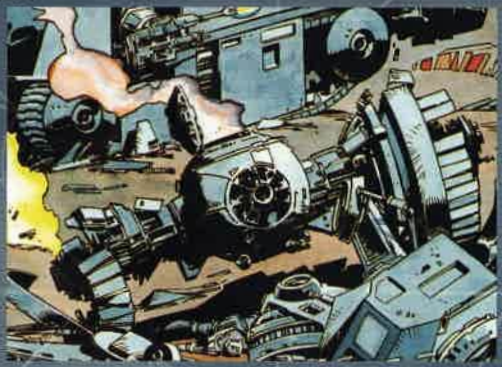
showed him a copy of the groundbreaking British comic *2000AD*. 'So I took a look at it, and I thought "Oh, I could do this. Yeah, I could do this, I think, yeah." Of his unique 'heavily engineered' style, Kennedy puts it down to his background, as he explained in the 1995 *Comics Interview Star Wars* special: '... it's always been in me, ever since I was very, very small. You know, sometimes I say to people that I connect things, tied in with the fact that I come from an engineering family. I think that a lot of that is in the Scottish blood. We always were a people who were building bridges and designing locomotives and things.' Though Kennedy's work on *Dark Empire* was a great success, it was the artist's work with British writer John Wagner on the *Boba Fett* comics from 1995 onwards that firmly established him as a fan favourite around the world.

THE TIE CRAWLER

CARRYING ON AFTER KENNEDY

ILLUSTRATING THE CENTURY TANK

1 *Dark Empire* was a six-issue series published bi-monthly between December 1991 and October the following year by Dark Horse Comics. It was published as a collected edition in 1995.



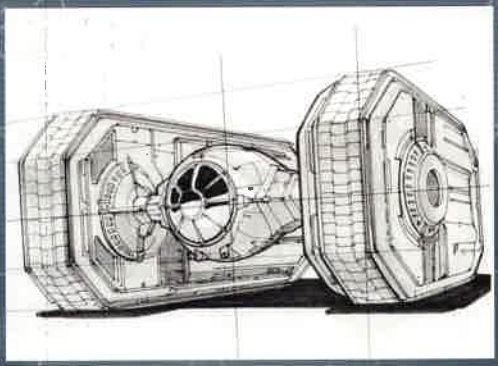
2 The TIE crawler only appeared once, as one relatively small part of a double page splash. Even then, as you can see, it was a smouldering wreck, abandoned by its pilot.

5 Ten years later, the creative team behind the *Official Star Wars Fact File* devoted four pages to the TIE crawler, complete with their own CGI pictures.

6 Wizards of the Coast released the *Rebellion Era Campaign Guide* for their role-playing game in 2009. It contained new art of the TIE crawler.

One of the things that has always made *Star Wars* so fascinating is the wealth of background detail. Characters who pass by at the back of a shot hint at lives beyond the main events. Ships and vehicles offer new possibilities. Thanks to Cam Kennedy's artistic ability to engineer convincing craft, a 'throw-away' design in the middle of his seventh page of *Dark Empire* art sparked new ideas in others.

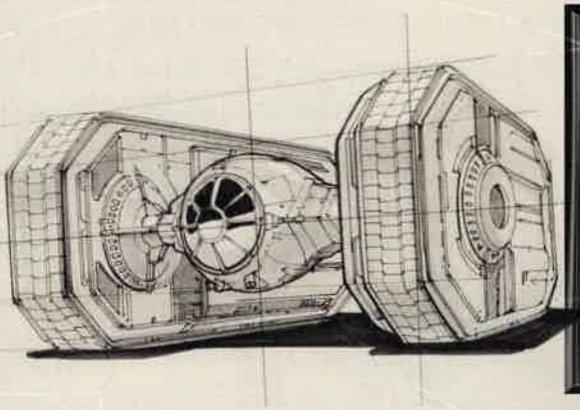
3 The design was taken up by Michael Allen Horne and his team at West End Games for a role-playing game sourcebook in 1993. The century tank was given a history, but no additional illustration.



4 In Del Ray's 1996 *The Essential Guide to Vehicles & Vessels*, a complete century tank was rendered as a schematic. The distinctive form of the tracks was now visible for the first time.

7 Three years before the Wizards of the Coast book, PC strategy game '*Star Wars*: Empire at War' included the TIE mauler, precursor to the century tank.

8 In 2007, Kennedy's creation received perhaps its greatest honour when LEGO released it as a kit for future engineers to build.



1 When West End Games named Cam Kennedy's tank design, what did they call it?

2 What has Luke Skywalker done to the Emperor?

3 Shug Ninx had a human father, but what species was his mother?

ANSWERS:

1. West End Games called Kennedy's design a TIE tank, but gave it the official designation of Santhe/Sienar compact assault vehicle. Its nickname was century tank, though this was later described in other sources as the official name, while TIE crawler became the nickname.

2. At that point, Luke had done nothing at all. It was the Emperor's choice to die, intending to transfer to one of his clone bodies. Luke tried to destroy them all before the Emperor could inhabit them, but he wasn't fast enough.

3. Shug Ninx's mother was a Theelin. From her he inherited his two finger and a thumb hands, and the light blue-green mottling on his skin. Tragically, the pure Theelin species died out after genetic mutations meant they were no longer able to produce offspring.

CLAK'DOR VII – CORUSCANT

Clak'dor VII

Region: Outer Rim Territories
System: Cirius Colu System

Homeworld of the Bith, Clak'dor VII was devastated by a bio-chemical device unleashed during a war over the patent for a stardrive. Unable to grow enough food, the population was decimated. Becoming sworn pacifists, the Bith lived in domed cities dependent on trade.

Colla IV

Region: Inner Rim Territories
System: Colla System

The vicious insectoid Colicoids who lived on Colla IV, while technologically advanced, were sufficiently dangerous to ensure that the planet was rarely visited. It was home to the Colicoid Creation Nest, who manufactured the deadly droideka for the Trade Federation.

Commenor

Region: Colonies
System: Nommenor System

A major trading world and the location of many spaceports, Commenor was wealthy and important. It was loyal to the Republic in the Clone Wars, and declared independence after the Battle of Endor. However, it continued to trade with both the Imperial Remnant and the New Republic.

Corellia

Region: Core Worlds
System: Corellian System

Corellia is part of what is believed to be an artificial system of five habitable planets. It is the home of Han Solo and other famous pilots, and is well known for its starships. The Corellians moved most heavy industry onto orbiting facilities, leaving the surface to agriculture.

Corulag

Region: Core Worlds
System: Corulus System

Colonised by humans from Coruscant in the earliest days of expansion, Corulag was one of the first worlds to form the Galactic Republic. It supported the Republic in the Clone Wars, but was very loyal to the Empire. Corulag held an Imperial military academy and many Imperial prisons.

Coruscant

Region: Core Worlds
System: Coruscant System

The capital world of the galaxy, the entire surface of the planet was swallowed up by an unbroken cityscape. Coruscant was a prize fought over for millennia, and no galactic government considered itself legitimate until it held Coruscant – often at the cost of its inhabitants.

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Model unavailable for photography at time of going to print.

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